

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 2872

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SU, PORG, SOPN

SUBJ: MEETING WITH HASSAN ALZEIN, DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF
MASS COMMUNICATIONS, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND
CULTURE, SUDAN

SUMMARY: SUMMARY: DAS DALLEY AND DIRECTOR UNA HOLLOWAY MET AT THE
EMBASSY WITH HASSAN ALZEIN, DIRECTOR OF THE SUDAN INSTITUTE
OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS, AFFILIATED WITH THE MINISTRY OF
INFORMATION AND CULTURE OF SUDAN, TO DISCUSS COMMUNICATIONS
ISSUES. ALZEIN SAID THAT SUDAN HAD BEEN VICTIMIZED BY
UNFAIR AND UNBALANCED REPORTING IN THE WESTERN NEWS MEDIA,
WHICH PLACED UNDUE EMPHASIS UPON THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF
THE SOCIETY AND MADE NO EFFORT TO TELL STORY OF DEVELOPMENT.
THE PROBLEM CAN BE SOLVED BY INCREASED DIALOGUE BETWEEN
JOURNALISTS FROM DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS AND BY
THE CREATION AND BUILDING OF INCREASED COMMUNICATIONS
INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. ALZEIN NOTED A
TREND TOWARD GREATER RESPONSIVENESS BY THE WEST TO THE
NEEDS OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS AND AGREED THAT IT WOULD
BE UNFORUNATE IF ACTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
SUCH AS THE ADOPTION OF A DRAFT DECLARATION ON MASS MEDIA
PRINCIPLES BY UNESCO SLOWED THE GROWTH OF DIALOGUE AND
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COOPERATION TOWARD THE SOLVING OF THE PROBLEM OF COM-
MUNICATION IMBALANCE AND RESULTED IN INCREASED
CONFRONTATION. AS CHAIRMAN OF THE INFORMATION COMMITTEE FOR
THE SUDAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO, ALZEIN
HOPES TO BE NAMED TO THE SUDANESE DELEGATION. IF HE COMES
TO PARIS HE WILL LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH THE
U.S. DELEGATION TO ASSURE A POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE

CONFERENCE ON COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES. ALZEIN WELCOMED GROWING EVIDENCE OF RESPONSIVENESS OF U.S. MEDIA COMMUNITY TO NEEDS OF COUNTRIES SUCH AS SUDAN AND IDENTIFIED ASSISTANCE FOR THE TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS AS SUDAN'S PRIORITY NEED. END SUMMARY

1. HASSAN ALZEIN, DIRECTOR INSTITUTE OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE SUDAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO MET WITH DAS DALLEY AND UNA DIRECTOR HOLLOWAY TO DISCUSS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS IMBALANCE, AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ISSUES. ALZEIN BELIEVES THE DEVELOPING WORLD IS DISADVANTAGED BY ITS COVERAGE IN THE WESTERN NEWS MEDIA. COVERAGE OF THE SUDAN EMPHASIZES THE PROBLEMS WITHOUT PLACING THEM IN THE PROPER CONTEXT OF A NATION STRUGGLING FOR UNITY, STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT AGAINST TREMENDOUS ODDS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE IMPORTANCE OF SUDAN AS A FOOD PRODUCING AREA WAS HIGH-LIGHTED BY THE WESTERN PRESS DURING THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT CRISIS, BUT THIS HAS BEEN A HISTORICAL REALITY THAT HAS DEMANDED MORE SERIOUS AND CONSISTENT ANALYSIS. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THE CREATION OF THE SUDAN NEWS AGENCY WAS TO PROVIDE SUDAN AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD WITH A MORE BALANCED AND COMPLETE PICTURE OF EVENTS IN SUDAN. OUTSIDE NEWS AGENCIES AND NEWSMEN ARE STILL WELCOME, BUT THE SUDAN NEWS AGENCY HAS BECOME THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF NEWS
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ABOUT SUDAN FOR THE COUNTRY AND FOR THE OUTSIDE WORLD. SINCE THE NAIROBI CONFERENCE ALZEIN HAS NOTICED A GREATER SENSITIVITY TO THIS PROBLEM BY THE WESTERN MEDIA. HE RECENTLY ATTENDED A COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON SPONSORED BY HOWARD UNIVERSITY AND KNOWS OF THE NEW YORK AND CAIRO CONFERENCES SPONSORED BY THE EDWARD R. MURROW SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM. HE FAVORS MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE SUCH DIALOGUES ON INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION ISSUES.

2. THE SUDAN INSTITUTE OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS OFFERS A TWO YEAR GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PRINT AND ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM. ITS STUDENTS ARE PROFESSIONALS FROM THE MINISTRIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SUDAN AND THE SUDANESE MEDIA WHO RETRUN AS A RULE TO THEIR FORMER JOBS AFTER COMPLETION OF TRAINING. ALZEIN BELIEVES THAT DOMESTIC TRAINING IS PREFERABLE WHEN THE TRAINING IS SHORT TERM. IF A SUDANESE STUDENT TRAVELS ABROAD FOR A TWO YEAR PROGRAM HE HAS TO SPEND TOO MUCH OF THAT SHORT PERIOD BECOMING ACCLIMATED TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT. TRAINING ABROAD OFFERS MORE CONTEXT, BUT SHOULD BE FOR LONGER TERM EDUCATION SUCH AS UNDER-GRADUATE FOUR YEAR PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS OF JOURNALISM.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE INTERNATIONAL DEBATE ON THE USES OF THE MEDIA, ALZEIN IDENTIFIED THE ISSUES AS BEING BOTH PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL. HE DECLINED TO DISCUSS THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION OF WHETHER THE MEDIA SHOULD BE CONTROLLED BY GOVERNMENT OR SHOULD BE FREE OF SUCH CONTROL, SAYING THAT WAS A DEBATE THAT WAS IN THE PROVINCE OF THE POLITICIANS AND ONLY SUBJECT TO A POLITICAL RESOLUTION. IN PRACTICAL TERMS THE DEVELOPING WORLD, AND SPECIFICALLY THE NATIONS IN AFRICA FACED A CHALLENGE OF PREPARING JOURNALISTS TO BECOME SUFFICIENTLY COMPETENT TO PORTRAY THE AFRICAN POINT OF VIEW TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. ALZEIN AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE MORE PRODUCTIVE FOR UNESCO TO CONCENTRATE ON THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS AND NOT ENTANGLE ITSELF IN THE "PHILOSOPHICAL" DEBATE OVER A DRAFT

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DECLARATION ON THE USES OF THE MEDIA.

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4. ALZEIN WAS APPOINTED TO THE SUDANESE DELEGATION TO THE 1974 UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE IN PARIS BUT WAS NOT ON THE DELEGATION IN NAIROBI BECAUSE OF GOS POLICY TO ROTATE THE REPRESENTATION FROM THE SUDAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO ON THE DELEGATION. RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISCUSSION OF COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES THAT WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE THIS FARW, ALZEIN WILL MAKE AN

EFFORT TO BE PLACED ON THE GOS DELEGATION. HE WELCOMED SUGGESTION THAT GOS DELEGATION TO THE UNESCO CONFERENCE WORK CLOSELY WITH U.S. DELEGATION ON COMMUNICATION ISSUES SO THAT THE FOCUS OF THE CONFERENCE WOULD BE A SOLUTION TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS RATHER THAN ARID DISCUSSIONS OF PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES.

5. ALZEIN EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT NEWS OF DISCUSSIONS IN U.S. MEDIA COMMUNITY AND U.S. GOVERNMENT OF BEST MEANS TO ASSIST THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY IN THE THIRD WORLD. HE IDENTIFIED ASSISTANCE FOR THE TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS AS SUDAN'S PRIORITY NEED.

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